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CHRIST

BY

C. SADAOKIHI HARTMANN

—

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CHRIST
A DRAMATIC POEM
IN THREE ACTS

*Presented to the Author
of the Dramatic Poem
Christ
in three Acts
C. Sadakichi Hartmann*

BY

C. SADAKICHI HARTMANN

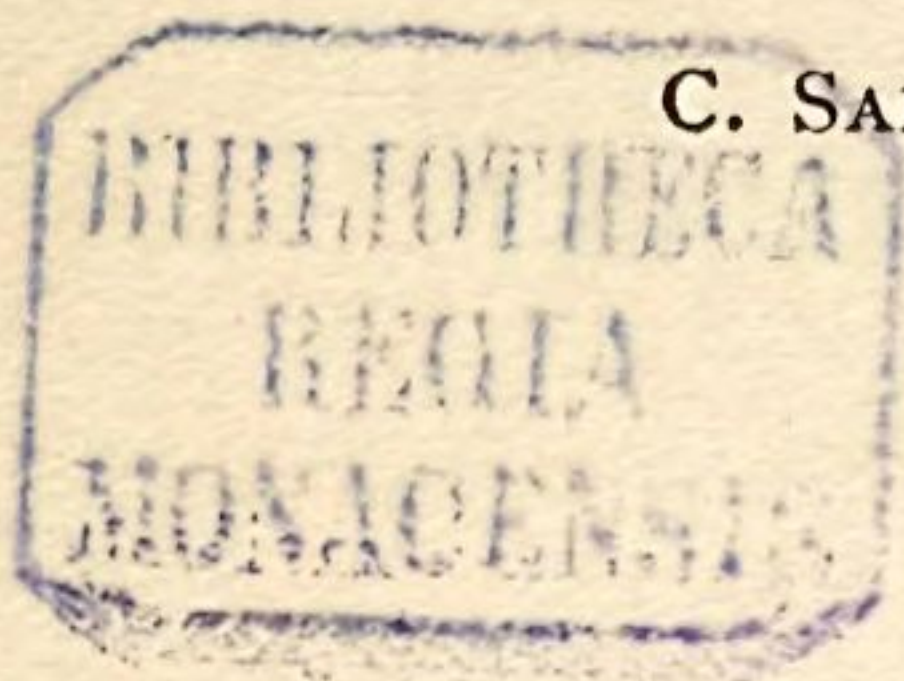
(1887 - 1892)

AUTHOR'S EDITION 1893

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C. SADAKICHI HARTMANN,

1893.



THIS WORK
IS DEDICATED TO THOSE
WHO HAVE
MISJUDGED, HUMILIATED, OR INJURED
ME
DURING MY PAST LIFE.

INTRODUCTION.

I have written this book because the "great Pan" is not dead yet. Sensuality rules the world as heretofore, and optimists like myself must seize every opportunity to awaken mankind from its Bacchanalian revery.

I am fully aware that mankind cannot be reformed by the medium of printed sheets of paper; therefore this book is written merely: to cultivate a consideration for the severe contagious malady of humanity, with the hope of arousing an interest in individual liberty in regard to religion and morality.

In this drama I allow myself a freedom of expression, which will be understood only by the few who are able to rise with me to the height from which I regard man and the universe. Full of contradictions as life itself, it can scarcely be thoroughly appreciated before it has been performed on the stage, with appropriate dramatic music and scenic effects.

Whatever nation gives an ideal representation of my drama "Christ" can claim of having a National Dramatic Art.

THE AUTHOR.

PERSONS REPRESENTED.

JESHUA.

MOTHER MARIA, *his mother.*

MAGDALEN, *his sister.*

Brothers and sisters to Jeshua.

AN OLD HERMIT.

TUBAL CAIN, *a money-dealer.*

HANNAH, *a pilgrimess.*

EVA, *a young widow.*

AHOLIBAH,

TABEA,

HAGAR,

ELLOSAR, *a poet.*

OTHNIEL,

REUBEN,

SEMAJA,

} *Young girls of the village.*

} *Young men of the village.*

Men, women, children, temple-guard, etc.

CARUS MAXIMUS, *a Roman centurion.*

Roman soldiers.

ZENOBIA, *a foreign queen.*

PRINCE PARSONDES.

CAMILLUS, *a Greek, her steward.*

ATMA, *a dancing-woman.*

*Cortege of Zenobia and Parsondes, stewards, male
and female attendants, body-guard, amazons,
musicians, palanquin-bearers, etc.*

SYNOPSIS.

ACT I. *Before Maria's Cottage, First Day, Evening.*

ACT II. 1.—*Interior of Maria's Cottage, Second Day, Dawn.*

2.—*Among the Sandhills, Second Day, Noon.*

3.—*Before Maria's Cottage, Second Day, Afternoon.*

ACT III. *Zenobia's Camp in the Desert, Third Day, Night.*

PLACE: *A Village in Palestine.*

TIME: *August, 20 A. D.*

ACT I.

CHRIST.

ACT I.

SCENE — *To the left Mother Maria's cottage. A road leads across the stage. In the background a well. View on the sandhills.*

TUBAL CAIN (*enters with Mother Maria.*) Nobody is impatient with his creditors, Mother Maria. As I have said before, my demands you must meet. Old Tubal Cain may be pot-bellied and bandy-legged, but he is not such a fool as to wait until the next festive year, he, he.

MOTHER MARIA (*leaning on a staff.*) You only open your mouth to speak evil.

TUBAL CAIN. The poor can easily be generous. The rich have to be brutal now and then. Yet we two will remain friends, won't we, Mother Maria?

MOTHER MARIA. The desire of gain has no true friends.

TUBAL CAIN. Yet its power is omnipotent.—How is Jeshua? It seems to me that he brings nothing but bitterness upon her who bore him.

MOTHER MARIA. True, he never lends a helping hand in all our distress, and yet he is my favorite son. Sorrow is often the comfort of old age.

TUBAL CAIN. He does not labor, aye? Labor warms the body; he who does not work deserves his poverty.

MOTHER MARIA. He was born for something better. I, his own mother, have never understood the motive of his life. He is different to other human beings.

TUBAL CAIN. No matter whether a goat be white or black, it should give the same amount of milk. That is an old saying. Things learnt in childhood are not forgotten.

MOTHER MARIA. Then remember your mother; she never spoke an unkind word to anyone.

TUBAL CAIN. I remember my mother well, he, he. When a child, I laughingly grasped with my little fingers for the glittering coins, which she was clinking in her hand to please me. Gold rules this world. An ass who denies it.

MOTHER MARIA. Cursed be the man who first brought gold among his fellow men. It dries up every source of kindness and affection.

TUBAL CAIN. Mammon is a lust of possession, and so is love. Like all human efforts it contains as much good as evil. Without these gerahs we would have no temple in Jerusalem, no caravans

bringing to us the luxuries of the East and West — no progress could take place. And those who willingly denounce wealth in words would be the very ones to misuse it, if they could, he, he.

MOTHER MARIA. But to what purpose do you toil and struggle? Your gold creates no beneficial influence. Avarice is no enjoyment.

TUBAL CAIN. If you would but consent to make my dwelling yours, you would value my frugality.

MOTHER MARIA. Be silent — not another word!

TUBAL CAIN. I or another man, what is the difference as long as one is wholesome?

MOTHER MARIA. To insult a woman is an easy task, Tubal Cain.

TUBAL CAIN. Gossip says so, not I. I like you; that's all. I like stout women. Yes, I do. He, he.

MOTHER MARIA. I have loved but once.

TUBAL CAIN. But he was not your husband?

MOTHER MARIA. To the carpenter I was married against my will. It was adultery. I have loved but once. The sun shone hot upon me, but the golden light did not linger upon my head. Like a day of pleasure, it quickly passed.

(*As to herself.*) One evening, standing out there in the desert, I mourned and longed for him who had left me for a hermit's life. I felt as if I were alone — alone in this wide, barren world. All

springs of nature were at rest ; neither bird nor insect seemed to live. All bright colors were lost in the darkness pervading the silent, desolate plain. Time itself stood still, as if hesitating to lift the veil from the immensity of that lonely, immeasurable stretch of sand, where hitherto, only the spirits of perished nations swayed in deep lament. It was a silence which my presence seemed to desecrate. An inexpressible fear came over me — a dream of heavenly love stormed o'er my trembling frame. I saw my lover's pale, wan face in clouds of raining light, and my maternal fruitfulness embraced the seed of Jeshua. (*She stands at the garden gate, in Titanic gloom after her short summer life, like the personification of the Jewish race — a picture, stern and sombre, like the Arabian desert.*)

TUBAL CAIN. Nature cannot be overcome. We all admire purity. It is our body that causes disturbances. We all err through our temperament. Yes, yes, Mother Maria, love is a burden.

MOTHER MARIA. It is a cruelty to women wherever unlawful maternity is proclaimed a crime. As long as a woman's body glows with the warmth of youth, men will be desirous to test her amateness. To him it becomes the memory of a radiant hour of joy ; while the woman is obliged to suckle a being of whom she owns nothing but the burden and the shame.

TUBAL CAIN. You speak of free copulation, I of marriage.

MOTHER MARIA. Wedlock is but free copulation sanctioned by the law, nothing more. Leave me for tonight, good Tubal Cain. (*Turns to exit.*)

TUBAL CAIN (*shrugs his shoulders; aside.*) How I would like to pet her haunches! (*Exits slowly.*)

JESHUA (*enters, robed in dull red.*) Mother, what are your dealings with this man?

MOTHER MARIA. Those which necessity demand. (*Looks at Jeshua with a yearning expression.*)

JESHUA. Mother?

MOTHER MARIA. My son, why do you act so strangely? People speak of you in a slandering way. They say that you intend renouncing the Mosaic laws. Remember, you are a Jew, even if your father was a stranger to this land. Do not take vengeance upon me and my great sin by casting aside the religion of my forefathers.

JESHUA. Mother, have I ever said a word of reproach to you?

MOTHER MARIA. No, Jeshua.

JESHUA. Why then, Mother, must our roads always cross each other?

MOTHER MARIA. I would do anything, my son, to please you. (*Aside.*) Can I do nothing to draw him to me? (*Exits.*)

JESHUA. Shall I ever be understood? The world is so wide, and I am alone! The world is so wide!—oh, years without fulfilment! how I suffer, wasting my energies of youth! In hours of adversity I also grow faithless like the rest. (*Occupies himself in the garden.*)

ELLOSAR (*enters in conversation with OTHNIEL, REUBEN, and SEMAJA.*) Day for day, my whole being concentrates itself in a long, lascivious, lambent breath of longing! How can these amorous sighs be satisfied? Youth is troublesome enough without sterility.

OTHNIEL. Virgins, for various reasons, are as inconvenient as lewds. Childless widows and cunning jades seem most commendable.

REUBEN. The guide through all sexual temptations should be health, and health alone.

SEMAJA. Oh, let nature have its way; we can in nowise improve upon it. (*Points to EVA.*) A wind-stirred garment reveals to men all there is and can ever be.

ELLOSAR. True enough. I feel as if dewdrops should impearl her lanuginous chalice of hope. Oh, garden of defloration, what loveless denudations have swept through thy mystic realms!

JESHUA. Innocence in manly strength should consecrate each sexual kiss with salutary gentleness.

OTHNIEL (*to SEMAJA.*) In such company, it were best to be a hermaphrodite.

ELLOSAR. Virtue can only be based on knowledge and conviction. The innocent and ignorant can neither be chaste nor sensual.

JESHUA. Self-denial in love's desire, however fierce or faint it may be !

ELLOSAR. Dear friend, you speak of self-denial and know not what it is. The pregnant lines in which a woman is created would also weave a magic web around your soul while resting in a virgin's arm.

JESHUA (*smiles.*)

OTHNIEL. Oh, abstinent Essenian ! For you must know that Jeshua is more modest than a sister of Ammon behind her curtain.

ELLOSAR. And you, wanton Saducee, cannot let a woman pass without insulting and undressing her in your imagination.

OTHNIEL. Can you ?

REUBEN (*musingly.*) Jeshua and Othniel are two entirely different representatives of life, and yet alike. Neither will fathom fatherhood.

SEMAJA (*to JESHUA.*) And do you never feel as if you should purify yourself in the ardent glow of a deep delight ?

JESHUA (*remains silent.*)

REUBEN. You see how natures differ. Othniel, you never knew restraint without dictation. Look at the Arabs, how they breed their horses. They do not allow the stallion to touch the mare after conception, while husbands molest their wives a few hours before delivery.

OTHNIEL. Should they mount their neighbor's mare, perhaps?

ELLOSAR. If men and women would practice purity in married life, what a glorious religion would rise from the present chaos! Science and philosophy, music and poetry, all arts, all noble, unselfish actions would be the children of one mother; Health.

OTHNIEL. When will that be?

ELLOSAR. The future will proudly assert that the seminal fluid of a perfect father is the very essence of life, and that upon the wombs of perfect mothers the happiness of the world depends. Sexual intercourse could be a religion! The wife, trembling with the hopes of maternity, embraces with all her trust and feminine grandeur her husband, who presses all his strength, his manliness, and ideal thought into her sacred body. Such a connection between body and body, soul and soul, is worthy of god—the creation of life, the eternity of nature, divinity itself!

OTHNIEL. If you were god, how different the world would be. (*Murmurs.*) For my part, Aholibahs suit my loins well enough.

SEMAJA. Such idle imaginings remain a blank to me.

REUBEN. It is a pastime. But who comes there?

SEMAJA. The old centurion, who has half persuaded me to join the Roman army.

CARUS MAXIMUS (*enters with soldiers and a crowd of villagers.*) Flock around the Roman eagle, boys! Show courage! Take the chance I offer you. Ovations and trophies shall be yours. Do not hesitate; enter a life of liberty! Nothing more glorious than a life of war!

JESHUA. Will mankind never lead a peaceful life?

CARUS MAXIMUS. Never, youth. War is a necessity; peace unnatural. What would become of man if he could not endure the sight of blood and death? What would become of valor, vigor, vassalage? They soon would have to sound retreat, and power would fall to the vafrous. I spent many years at Augustus' imperial court, unrolled many a parchment scroll, witnessed the devotions of many creeds, gazed at the triumphs of beauty in Rome and in foreign lands, but nothing met my eye that could rival this keen-edged sword. Rather a scabrous gladiator than

a decrepit sage ! To me, he is a god who knows no fear ! Who will enlist ?

SEMAJA. Put down my name ! I have nothing to lose and much to gain.

YOUNG MEN. Also mine !—And mine !—Would I had no filial piety to perform !—Alas, that I am still so young !

CARUS MAXIMUS. Brave, my boys ! You will never repent it. Blow the bugle ! strike the drum ! We march tomorrow. Now go, and enjoy the last evening at home ; and let sweet-hearts and sisters decorate my future heroes with garlands of flowers. (*Exits with soldiers and young men, who shout and embrace each other.*)

Young girls and women come with jars and vessels to the well, TABEA and HAGAR among them.

HERMIT (*crosses the stage.*) I once dreamed like you, my boys. I also loved the burning sun ; now, I prefer a clear and mellow evening. The feeling of approaching darkness and melancholy solitude of night, puts my mind at rest. All your strength, imagination, ardent zeal of youth, will arrive at the same goal. And as annihilation knows of no restraint, the nations which you conquer, as well as the Roman empire which you serve, will perish. At last all humanity will decay. Sun and stars will extinguish ; like this day, the earth will sink into oblivion.

TABEA. She will soon be here. I long to see her.

AHOLIBAH (*enters with EVA; a mysterious, sensual smile plays continually about AHOLIBAH'S lips, she is dressed in green and black.*) Are you speaking of the foreign queen? I am craving to know, how many of her suitors the enchantress has killed.

TABEA. Her camp equipments passed by this morning. At least thirty camels, accompanied by hundreds of slaves.

HAGAR. Why are some people so poor and others so rich?

AHOLIBAH. There is no greater harlot living; they say, she changes her lovers as we change our robes.

TABEA. That takes away all my pleasure of seeing her.

AHOLIBAH. You need not stay. The loom and spindle are waiting for you at home. (*Aside.*) Oh, if I could but lead her wild, unrestrained life! Oh, that there are thousands of men longing for us, and that we dare not satisfy them and ourselves. The thought drives me mad. Why is this forbidden and that not allowed? If it is wrong, why am I so created that at certain moments I feel like throwing myself into the arms of the lowest man?

EVA. Hush!

MOTHER MARIA (*sings inside the cottage.*) Unhappy children, having lost a parent still mother-naked, children growing up in ignorance and want, children bred without a kind word or kiss.

Toil along, toil along!

Unhappy lovers, young widows and widowers, parents sitting at the empty cradle, beggars, all diseased and deformed beings, poets and artists without success,

Toil along, toil along!

Unhappy mortals, struggling with poverty, sickness and sorrow, repentant sinners, all human beings who have a crime on their conscience,

Toil along, toil along, oh, toil along!

ELLOSAR. Look at the last greeting of the setting sun! What color-dreams weave over the distant hills! The evening star steals softly into the trembling air. (*The temple-guard is heard singing.*) Heaven on earth! That my art could hold this picture for eternity! But before we have comprehended it, it fades in its magic flight.

OTHNIEL. Ellosar, write a song on these colors, so hot and so wild!

REUBEN. The golden dust can be seen, but not grasped.

ELLOSAR. Always denying?

REUBEN. Always searching for truth.

ELLOSAR. And never admiring when it reveals itself.

TABEA. How wide the meshes of the spider's web are. A sure sign of bad weather.

AHOLIBAH. I dissolve in pain. (*The languid voluptuousness of Southern climes takes possession of her body.*)

EVA (*in profound silence watches the sunset. Jeshua comes into the garden and saws wood.*)

TABEA. Look at Jeshua.

AHOLIBAH. He pretends to be above curiosity.

EVA. Jeshua always acts as he feels.

OTHNIEL (*to AHOLIBAH.*) You spoke quite differently about him last summer, if I do not err?

AHOLIBAH. We sometimes change and know not why.

HAGAR. In my life, nothing changes. One day is like the other, full of pain.

HANNAH (*enters barefooted; she perceives JESHUA, and stands as if in a dream; the languid voluptuousness of Southern climes takes for a moment possession of her soul.*)

TABEA. Queer I could never understand Jeshua.

OTHER GIRLS. Nor I! — Nor I!

AHOLIBAH. What is there strange about it? Is

he not the son of Mother Maria? Sons take after their mother. (*Aside.*) God forgive me for saying this. How I have loved that man! Milk exuded from my nipples from very joy, when I thought of him. And he rejected me!

EVA. Jeshua deserves everyone's love.

RECHA. There they come! (*Music is heard, slaves appear waving perfumed kerchiefs and strewing flowers, carmine, and gold dust on the road. Coins are thrown among the crowd, who shout Hosanna!*)

JESHUA. So everybody is saluted, whether friend or foe, as long as curiosity is satisfied. (*Enter CAMILLUS and attendants, some on horseback. ZENOBIA, dressed in striped black and golden yellow, is borne on a palanquin. PRINCE PARSONDES rides in a chariot. The village girls hail them with palm leaves.*)

PARSONDES. What a vile place!

ZENOBIA. We shall linger here over night.

PARSONDES. In your embrace the humblest spot on earth converts into a place of bliss.

MURMURING OF THE CROWD. Is 'nt she just splendid!—She looks like the queen of abomination!—What sumptuous, saturated brilliancy!—What merciless glare and glitter!—Not half as dazzling as I thought!—Observe the luring glances of her emerald eye!—I wonder if the vermilion of her lips is real!—How grey those many-colored

tunics look ! — Will I be able to hallow her after-image by my art ?

ZENOBIA. How they stare at me ! I am used to the shouting of multitudes. Soulless creatures, insipid fools, they envy me, and do not know that I am the unhappiest creature of them all. In my mighty passion I absorb all other ones. I stand smiling in the arena of the world, and shed my heart-blood unseen, in the carmine and gold dust of my poetry. (*Suddenly perceives JESHUA, and stares at him. HANNAH anxiously watches the queen.*)

CAMILLUS. What ails you, my queen ?

ZENOBIA. Find out the name of yonder swain.

CAMILLUS (*aside.*) May the gods of your forefathers preserve you from her luring smiles, young Jew.

ZENOBIA. I have never met the man of whom I desired children until now. Embracing him I could fall into eternal slumber. And mine he will be. An ocean of light surrounds me. Oh, could I but throw myself into its clear and steady flames, that it might purify and burn up all that is foul within me !

AHOLIBAH. She has cast an eye upon the coyish dreamer. Ha ! wait now and see, if he can resist that virulent demon of passion.

HANNAH. I knew it, I knew it ! (*ZENOBIA and procession exit ; the crowd follows them. A few*

remain, speaking about the event, then slowly disperse in different directions. Only HANNAH and JESHUA remain on the stage. It grows dark during the following scene.)

HANNAH (*slowly approaches JESHUA, and whispers with sisterly affection.*) Beware! Beware!

Long pause.

JESHUA. Who are you?

HANNAH. A part of you. All else I love in you. Take what I am, it is yours!

JESHUA. Who are you?

HANNAH. I know no more, I simply feel that I belong to you, and to nobody else on earth. (*They gaze at each other for a long while, then embrace.*)

JESHUA. The first long, slumbering kiss confirms all that god and the heavens decreed.

HANNAH (*quivering with bliss.*) Hold me fast!

Pause.

JESHUA. Also upon us lingers the silent sadness known to all who listen to the woeful song of life and death. We soar above the dust and bitterness of human cares. When our lips meet, they touch —

HANNAH. Infinitude.

JESHUA. Infinitude. Our Love is as healthy and strong as the noon of summer days. Ages may sink into the past, yet our friendship would not

change, not even with death, for we would continue —

HANNAH. Beyond.

JESHUA. Beyond. The waves of our mind meet on the vibrating ocean of air, and wandering to and fro, from soul to soul, call forth responsive thoughts.

BOTH (*as in a trance, hardly audible, HANNAH speaking more softly than JESHUA, like music accompanying a song.*) Our Love fills the world with the thunder of unearthly joy! We penetrate into all the kindred parts of the universe. Like eagles, we cleave the ambient realms of dark and darker blue, and break the dreariness of Northern darkness as inconstant lights. We sweep over vast, variegated plains, and sink with the roaring waters into the depth of the wild, unresting sea!

How glorious is our Love! We float with the jubilating songs of nightingales on the silver beams of night. We rest on the lips of lovers; we bloom with the flowers that fade unseen, and smile through the mist of tears at morn. We rest on Nature's bosom, and dream her naked dream of grace; we feel the burning passion of all mankind, and the body becomes as sacred as the soul!

How old and new is our Love! We are buried by hurricanes that crush the homes of

peaceful men ; we drown in seas of blood shed for a future state of joy. And, with enthusiasm's blazing flames our Love soars to the suns of heaven, and falls into the sunless gulfs of hell. We leap into the boundlessness of space, and taste in the rapture of one moment, the eternity of time !

We laugh at the violence of fate ; we laugh at wealth, wisdom, beauty, power. We sink into each other's arms. Dark immensity of night surround us ! We are in Love ! (*In their kisses, body and soul are trembling in a rapturous embrace.*)

The heavens open ! The widening infinite ! Spirits of heaven and hell, they cast their sickles upon earth, and stars are falling from the clouds, and earthquakes split the realms, and still we cry for Love, more Love !

And from the unfathomed depth of this restless world rise thousands of gigantic visions. We tremble in the laments of life ; we feel the holy agony, the godlike sufferings of the past ; and our bodies crumble into dust, while our souls mount to those wonderful, brooding stars, which flame through the sky in endless variation.

(*Hermit enters.*)

Oh, everchanging orbs of God, you are the symbol of Love ! Myriads of falling stars, that whirl around each other, you are like the maddening yearning of humanity itself : the nameless

longing of life and Love to throw itself into another life and Love, until you dash together in the fury of a glorious, overwhelming light! (*Meteors shoot across heaven.*)

HERMIT. Oh, world of fire-balls, destined to be embodied in one star, in you mankind can read, night for night, the secret of the universe, how glowing suns transform into cold and glittering stars of ice, till they collide to become once more the ardent suns of time and space. And like creation's cycling course the stars form circles, rolling forth in endless chains to nothingness. The fires of the universe prophecy their destiny in your immortal Love, (*extends his arms to HANNAH and JESHUA,*) when at last, in the far-distant future, all the ambitious suns of heaven tumble into one mighty, burning giant star, who will shed a light of redemption over the final union of hostile elements, sleeping mysteriously and motionless in the dark immensity of time. Then Love, the one colossal soul of the departed worlds, will dreamingly begin a new existence for decillions of ages to come. (*The old hermit exits, the lovers remain as petrified, in an embrace expressing the triumph of purity in Love. The stars are sparkling like diamonds on the turquoise vault. After a long pause, the curtain drops.*)

ACT II.

NOT IN

ACT II.

SCENE I.

SCENE. — *An interior of Mother Maria's cottage. The deep violet light of dawn streams through the windows. Jeshua's brothers and sisters sleep picturesquely grouped on mats, divans, and cushions, around a hearth of clay.*

JESHUA (*dreaming a morning dream.*) Oh, Hannah, star of my life, you shall not go! Can it be true that even you will fade from the heaven of my hopes? Your lips are twitching with secret wishes, yet your eyes are staring in bitter hate. Let us then part! No love proves true within these whirling spheres. Farewell, grey walls of my mother's home! Farewell to the sand-hills and vineyards where I have roamed in hours of careless innocence! Farewell to all the interests of youth! Farewell, beloved one; farewell to all the sacred hours, the hopeful dreams of our love!

And hail to thee, thou dismal land, where the restive joys of our past will grow to unknown fates!—It is so dark around me now. No love proves true within these whirling spheres. Yet you I must remember in all eternity.

Day and night, roll on, roll on, and sweep away my paradise of dreams ! All better thoughts flee from my memory ! Swift-gliding years in restless works are all that I behold.

Oh, nature, fill me with the violent energy of life ! I wish to conquer and command. Now see me kneeling at the feet of those who wear the diadems of fame. I flatter them. I rise, and all their sins I own. Swift-gliding years in restless works are all that I behold, and thus all former virtues turn but fugitive lights in the haunting shadows of my self. Now I am king ! Woe to you all ! Like sultry winds, the breath of death lolls on the plain.

Humanity make no demands on me ! You speak of innocence, how it suffers in this fleeting dream ; but what is that to me ? Let them perish in this world of moan. Begone, with words you cannot threaten me ! Away, detested race, I hate you. Do not curse me ; accurse yourselves, for you have petrified my soul.

Oh, that I knew a being on whose breast I could forget that immortality is the fate of every living object on the earth ! Oh, that I knew a place where I could rest when, in dark and dreary hours, the horror of loneliness steals on my weary heart ! Yet all my life is vain. My soul knows love no more, and all my sufferings are eternal, creep into the infinite.

Oh, nature, you majestic queen of all, come with your storms, and let them desolate the lands! Open your deepest depth of hell, my mother earth, and take me back into thy burning lap! Fall upon me, ye proud and dazzling walls of heaven; bury the remnants of my life; oh, still under the ruins my reeling brain would feel the tortures of that thought from which is no escape!

Prophet star. thy light is fading in the purple rain of sin. Hope is dying, hope is dying, loud and louder grows the din. Blood, blood, blood through all the ages, from beginning to the end! Blood, blood, blood in every dwelling — glint of steel in clinching hand! Tears, tears, tears in every valley where the seeds of life are sown. Tears, tears, tears on every summit where a fruitful tree has grown!

Enough laments, enough of woe! Here I lie prostrate and forlorn before thy mighty throne, god of my better days; dead while living, waiting for a deathless death I pray! Hark! Hear I right? A voice is calling. "Human sins will be forgiven through your faith in Hannah's faith."

Oh, dreams of my youth, you golden memories of the past, help me to find my soul again! Oh, love, let sound thy melodies! Oh, morning sun of love, of first and only love, shine into my aching soul, that it may learn to hope again!

Dawn, aurora, a new life ! The infinite sufferings of years are melting into tears of joy. Leave me, black night ! Dark shadows, fly ! Oh, slumbering world, awake ! I pray to the star of immortality — to pure, unselfish love.

(Curtain.)

ACT II.

SCENE II.

SCENE.—*Among the sandhills. A road leads across the stage. At the right, a view on the sublime solitude of the desert.*

HERMIT. Oh, sunshine, sunshine, how you dazzle, and spread your light upon the vast and silent plain. Here is rest from the turmoil of the world. Everywhere silence: deep, sad silence; nothing torments me; it is as if I knew everything, and was set free from all earthly bonds. And yet as I feel at my heart, and listen to its peaceful hymns, pictures of the past are rising. Once more I stand in the golden light of youth. I longingly open my arms, as I was wont to do in the days when I was young, and I clasp the empty air. The desert lies before me. The hoped-for happiness was but a dream of youth. Self-improvement has taught me to accept success and failure as they come. Hope is justified through nothing on this earth, for existence is illusion, and human efforts but a grand mistake. Even the greatest success is a failure. The sage alone never fails, because he never attempts to

act. So I patiently wait, until I go to those regions, where neither weal nor woe can influence us, where ideas melt into the oblivion of Nirvana : a realm of perfect peace, without even a suggestion of the absence of ideas.

JESHUA (*enters in deep meditation.*) Will I succeed?

HERMIT. My son !

JESHUA. Will I teach mankind to lead a happier life than they do now ?

HERMIT. How can sorrow be extinguished by a mortal ?

JESHUA. By hope in all adversity.

HERMIT. Will it give them hours of absolute serenity, undarkened by the gloom of care ?

JESHUA. Yes, if all human beings considered themselves the members of one family ; if we assisted each other to overcome every evil that befalls us.

HERMIT. You speak of something, that can never be ours in all lights and shades of eternity.

JESHUA. Some glorious inspiration may form mysterious clouds around me — the shadows of the greatest light.

HERMIT. Vain endeavors ! The eternal light may shine, but the darkness will not comprehend it. Tell them to live without demands, and happiness will be theirs unawares. If we abandon appetites and restrain our passions, we escape all troubles

and anxiety. We bring joy and pain upon ourselves. The highest phase of life is to be self-contained, immutable.

JESHUA. Who but a sage can do it? Inferiors cannot depend upon their strength alone. The reward of virtue by a higher power will give them self-enjoyment, rectitude, and peace.

HERMIT. Nature alone could do it. No promise can be more exalted than the voice which speaks in wind and water. Let nature sound its echoes in the human soul, and it will rise above nations, lands, and seas; above the world, above the stars, to search in the vast wastes of ether for its original home.

JESHUA. You are like the lily on the placid waters, sublime in mystery. Wait for the day of revelation.

HERMIT. The unknown will never be known, the unconscious will never be conscious.

JESHUA. You cannot rob me of my faith. If men and women had *no secrets* from each other, and felt that the intention is as good or bad as the deed itself, they would not hesitate to pity and pardon, to trust and assist each other. Then love would find its final utterance in all embracing sympathy. The rest I leave to the wisdom of my people.

HERMIT. On whose help do you depend in this gigantic task?

JESHUA. I trust in myself alone.

HERMIT. A man who trusts in himself is isolated.

JESHUA. A man with new and bold ideas expects no help from others.

HERMIT. Bold youth, what is your will against that power that formed substance, life, and space from the chaos of time?

JESHUA. I know one man is nothing, fate everything, but some men become their own fate.

HERMIT. Kingdoms have fallen to ruins, the gods of old stand lonesome at their shrines, whole civilizations have been swept away in the furious run of time, the sand of the desert may swallow up all Palestine — the loving arms that embraced me in childhood have withered long ago. Why should the laws of your new faith prove irresistible? Human life is a continual up-and-down, never ending, never-changing, until everything has passed away.

JESHUA. If everything is transitory, if nothing can resist the gnawing tooth of time, if everything that our eyes behold must gradually decay, let us at least wander towards the future, hand in hand, like lovers, like brothers and sisters, like the children of one god!

HERMIT. Progress will welcome every gleam and

glimmer of true light. (*Bugles sound; both listen. The Roman soldiers pass by.*)

SEMAJA. Farewell, Jeshua! Manhood is made to wander, and so am I. God alone knows whither. My love to Recha, and a farewell to all!

YOUNG MEN (*exit, shouting and singing.*)

JESHUA (*standing on a rock. Now and then the bugles sound, gradually dying away.*) God be with you! May everyone reach satisfaction at the end. I do not envy you. True, it is great, banner in hand, to lead an army of strong, armed warriors to victory. To march, crowned with the laurel wreath of fame, under triumphal arches to the Capitol! To sit on golden thrones, and have proud foreign queens kneel at one's feet. Alas! my road will also lead over battle fields, with mangled, festering corpses, pass through odious seas of stenchening blood; but it will lead to truth.

HERMIT. And what is truth?

JESHUA (*crosses his arms on his breast, and looks up to heaven.*)

HERMIT (*softly shakes his head, and exits.*)

Pause.

JESHUA (*prays.*) Oh, god of truth, I have listened so often to the captious and minations words of my brethren; for years I have meditated if thou art truly existent, and always with the same

result — reason denies thee, feeling affirms thee still. Oh, god of truth, thou art inexplicable ! Who dares to manifest thee ? Thou art to men and women what they should be to themselves. And yet the highest thought to which my urgent, auguring mind can rise, art thou : my property, nobody else's. Faith in thee is only in its totality alike, giving to every creature a different ideal of thy existence. — I am no Jew. — I belong to no creed. — I belong to every one. — I endeavor to be god man. — Better voice within myself, thou art my god ! Brethren, my god is within me. I am myself my god ! (*Falling asleep, he murmurs.*) Dark spots and sparks of fire — streaks of red — a deluge of unknown colors — a luminous orb is drowning fast — familiar scenes rise reddish-brown — an unseen smile is floating by ; the sin of love in a serpent eye.

Desert weaving.

ZENOBIA (*enters, dressed like the Assyrian Istar, with bow and quiver slung over her shoulder. She makes a sign to her female attendants to depart, then looks at JESHUA for a long while before she speaks,*) Why do my knees tremble as I loosen my girdle ? Zenobia's pride has humbled the most audacious self-esteem, and shall not fail this time !

JESHUA (*raves in his dream.*) On sunny shades — creation's music — reflux waves of after-bliss — a cross is rising within the white and bluish mist

—black, gigantic ; it fills the universe — save one red flower climbing up the shaft, all else grows dark — and dead — also the flower breaks, and— (*ZENOBI*A kisses *Jeshua's* mouth.) falls upon my mouth like soft, human lips. (*He awakes,*) What fragrant dream of beauty blurs my sight? Ha! whom do I behold?

*ZENOBI*A. Zenobia, queen of the East! Cling to me, and leave on my lips the voluptuous breath of life, a deluge of fire, boundless desires for never-ending bliss. The yearning for an ideal existence as a curse on our head, and the wonderful flower of passion in the suffocating heat of our hearts, we wander lonesome on the shore of cold reality, extending our arms towards a home of joy, which will never be ours.

JESHUA. We two have nothing in common.

*ZENOBI*A. Nothing but ambition. Are not our kisses like lamentations from the depths of the earth? Are not our sighs like the hungry cry of two majestic beasts of prey, searching for glowing flesh and blood in the desert of sensation?

JESHUA. Woman, I do not understand your passion nor your sadness, for sad you are. I long for deep affection which is lasting, like the love of a mother to her child; the love of twin brothers and sisters; of the artist for his art, destined by higher decrees to mingle and be one.

ZENOBIA. Oh, listen to the flow of my tears, over the nothingness of life, in the elegies of those nights when my body can find no rest in the limitation of its sphere; when my better self is praying for an eternal sleep, in the arms of deathless joy. Then there is within me a chaos in which good and evil spirits crowd together in indescribable confusion. My body, as if possessed by madness, devoured by passions gloomy and imperishable, is in a desperate war with my better self, which strives for the serene perfection of a god.

JESHUA. If nothing can satisfy you, what do you want of me?

ZENOBIA. Give me peace in pleasure, and the riches of Judea shall be yours! I will make you the ruler of vast domains; nations shall kneel at your feet, and hail you king! Your name shall be carried over land and sea; it shall even reach distant Lundinium. The kings of all the world shall pay homage to you!

JESHUA. Worldly enjoyments are valueless to me.

ZENOBIA. Then I renounce them. (*Scatters gold.*) I tear the jewels from my limbs! (*Throws off her jewels.*) Take me as I am, I am yours!

JESHUA. Woman, what is your aim in this? If you think of tempting me, your efforts shall prove vain.

ZENOBIA. Oh, come to the festivals of my native land; to flower beds in enchanted groves, near shimmering lakes! There, before the sacred shrines of our shadowy gods, wrapt in clouds of incense, men and women dance to the tinkling of cymbals and the wailing of flutes. Bare shoulders and naked breasts glow in the tepid atmosphere, flowing garments are floating in an ocean of light, and myrrh and orange blossoms sink fading to the ground. How the torchlight dwells upon the half-veiled limbs! Louder and louder the music sounds, swifter and swifter the footsteps glide over the glittering sand! Look at those bacchantes! Their dark eyes — what wild desires they express — their trembling nostrils and moist, quivering lips! In emulous ardor every movement tempts with boundless bliss! Thought and feeling are forgotten, only the body lives!

JESHUA. Cease to speak! I will listen no further.

ZENOBIA. Oh, for the days of soft rubescence, ere my free, fresh inflorescence was unmarred by violation's glow! The nightingales sang softly on sycamore and cypress tree, mild southern winds caressed the blushing rose in all her maiden bashfulness. The odors of the dew-lit chalice stole softly into the silent air of night, and in her burning chastity of passion the flower yielded all her sweet virginity. The leaves fell

fading to the ground, and only stem and spine looked up to the blackest sky.

JESHUA. Life is to all a mournful dream.

ZENOBIA. Should I have thrown away the withered wreath which has ornamented my hair, hung my rumpled garment on the thorny hedge and donned a servant's garb?

JESHUA. I pity you.

ZENOBIA. No, I continue to drink the bacchanalian joys of life! I kindle the evanescent sparks of the hearth to a mighty flame, enrapture and drink enraptures, receive and give, think and feel with the ambitious energy of youth, though spring has left my features and the noonday sun has passed the summit. Follow me to fragrant bowers! The wrinkled garments fall from my limbs, while the languid, half-closed eyes look around in search. You, the lover, sink down at my side.

JESHUA. Temptress, leave me! I can never be yours!

ZENOBIA. Press closer and closer to me! Listen to nature's voice. It is the expression of our overflowing lives. The forests sound, the waters roar, and in the trembling air the fire flies build their heaven of sparkling light, like fickle stars that crowd the firmament of night.

JESHUA. Let me go! Inordinate love can gain no power over me.

ZENOBIA. Behold me as I am! (*Rends her garment.*) This godlike form is yours!

JESHUA (*yields for one moment, then suddenly frees himself.*) I still resist!

ZENOBIA.—What woman's son are you?—I see my efforts to conquer you are in vain; but in my body boils a sea of blood. Now I give vent to all inhuman feelings that find shelter in my belly's flame! (*Seizes her dagger.*) I'll limb and laniate the body of my wayward suitor; lacerate his selfish heart, and amidst writhing mutilations and smoking sloughs of blood, I shall stand triumphant! (*Stands for one moment transfigured as the incarnation of lust, then throws herself upon JESHUA, who disarms and forces her to the ground. A groan comes from ZENOBIA'S lips, she murmurs*) Forgive! (*and clings to the burning sand in voluptuous despair. The sun burns intensely.*)

JESHUA. Oh, woman, your incessant, fearful struggle of the body with the soul, of light with darkness, reality with the ideal, is like the universal song of life and death. You are immortal, even with your faults, which fetter you to the shadow of shadows, and your virtues, which lift you to the light of lights.

Curtain.

ACT II.

SCENE III.

SCENE AS IN ACT I. — JESHUA'S *brothers and sisters*,
eating dried dates and drinking camel's milk, sit
in the garden. JESHUA *mends his Sabbath*
breeches.

MAGDALEN. Brother, what is love?

JESHUA. A flower growing in the human soul. Its buds break forth and open to a life of sunshine. At first a zephyr gently kisses the trembling leaves; suddenly a storm starts up, and the chill, dark earth consumes its fading charms. For the flower of love has no abode on earth; her yearning is for an eternally faraway home, from whence she has come, to which she must return. And if she reveals herself in her serenest beauty, she stands on the grave of two human beings, who have drunk from her chalice the benediction of another world.

MAGDALEN. This is very sad; and does love never dwell upon earth in any other form?

JESHUA. Never.

MOTHER MARIA (*sings inside the cottage.*) Unhappy lovers, young widows and widowers, parents sit-

ting at the empty cradle, beggars, all diseased and deformed beings, poets and artists without success,

Toil along, toil along !

(*Calls*). Come in, my children. Leave Jeshua alone !

MAGDALEN. Never tell me such a story again, for it makes me weep. I feel as if the angels had to weep in heaven to see such sorrow upon earth. (*Opens her eyes wide, with an expression of innocence, as if her glance should penetrate all the world. Children exit.*)

JESHUA. Who can understand the soul of children ? —They should be taught by the young.—We will never get farther than this child—.What will my future Magdalen be?—Last night I beheld a world sublime beneath the sky ; how can I speak such bitter words of sorrow now ? (*HANNAH enters.*) Strange feelings have come over me. I hardly know myself. (*Breaks a lily and plucks out the stamens.*)

Pause.

BOTH (*as before.*) The chaos of our childlike dreams have merged into unsatisfied desires. Our love is poisoned by heart-corroding thoughts, and the mysteries of creation have become the temptation in our Eden-like dream. (*Their voices falter, tears fall from their eyes, profound sobs convulse their throats.* JESHUA kneels at HANNAH'S feet, lowers his

head in bitter supplication, and weeps. She looks at him with an expression of indescribable sadness, her whole body trembles, then the sunshine breaks through the clouds, an angelic smile glides over her face, and the drapery unveils itself from the divine beauty of her body. Music.—HANNAH hastily arranges her drapery, which formed a background to her denudation.)

JESHUA. Your nakedness was a prayer! (*To ELLOSAR, who enters.*) Soon you will hear from me. The mission of my life begins this very hour. MOTHER MARIA *enters the garden, and converses with HANNAH.*)

ELLOSAR. People, nowadays, believe only in signs and wonders.

JESHUA. Then I will stoop to do them.

ELLOSAR. Oh, that I could always stay with you!

JESHUA. You could forget yourself, but not your art.

ELLOSAR. Oh, my beloved art!

JESHUA. Fair for a day.

ELLOSAR. Fair for ages to come! Art eternizes whatever is beautiful; each idea by purity composed has right to breathe the vital air. Inspirations of color, sound, or thought will yet survive when the pyramids have fallen to ruins, and the temple of Jerusalem no longer lifts its golden dome against the azure of the timeless sky.

JESHUA. May be, but to what end?

ELLOSAR. To beautify — to beautify!

JESHUA. Proceed, my prophet, and with the crown of martyrdom enter the kingdom of heaven!

ELLOSAR. I wonder who is the greater dreamer of us two? (*Sits down near the well.*)

MAGDALEN (*enters.*) Brother, take a walk with me!
(*JESHUA takes her hand.*)

MOTHER MARIA. Bring me home some flowers.

MAGDALEN. I am not to break any flowers.

MOTHER MARIA. Why, my darling?

MAGDALEN. I think that flowers have a soul like human beings.

MOTHER MARIA. Angel, a flower yourself! (*JESHUA and MAGDALEN exit.*)

HANNAH. I love him more than god and all existences! Oh, Mother, do you know those moments when a soul in ecstasy of bliss rises to the eye in shape of tears, moments when our faltering lips would murmur words of wonder, what mighty incomprehensible thoughts the human mind can hide, which give us a glimpse into infinity which give us the right to hope?

MOTHER MARIA. I do, my child, only too well.

HANNAH. Thus I have felt since his first kiss which still glows upon my lips. If there is a Paradise on earth, it is this, it is this!

TUBAL CAIN (*passes by.*)

MOTHER MARIA. Your words return to me all that I have lost. God of my forefathers, send thy blessing upon these two until they find repose in thy omnipotence. (*Exits.*)

ELLOSAR (*watching HANNAH, aside.*) Oh, Jeshua, let thyself sink deep into the inward smile of loving souls.

HANNAH. If I could make him happy!

AHOLIBAH (*followed by ZENOBIA, disguised.*) Hasten, he may soon return.

ZENOBIA. Leave me! (*Hands gold to AHOLIBAH, who joins ELLOSAR.*) I have arranged my plans. (*Laughs wildly.*) How That homely mendicant in patched clothes can make him dream of love! (*To HANNAH.*) Where are your thoughts?

HANNAH (*absent minded.*) With him, alas!

ZENOBIA. You recognise me?

HANNAH (*nods.*) What do you want of him?

ZENOBIA. Fear not that I come to do him injury.

HANNAH (*murmurs.*) He is invulnerable.

ZENOBIA. I also love him.

HANNAH. Who can help loving him?—How I pity you.

ZENOBIA (*aside.*) Audacious one!—You know the ambition of his life?

HANNAH. I feel what it might be. He will succeed.

ZENOBIAS (*aside.*) Oh, for her faith! And yet one obstacle exists.

HANNAH. Name it.

ZENOBIAS. It would make you more unfortunate than human lips can devise.

HANNAH. I do not understand. No service which I could render him would bring unhappiness to me. Name it, I implore you.

ZENOBIAS. He loves his ambition most of all. Your faithfulness would hinder him in its fulfilment.

Pause.

HANNAH. That my dream should come to such an end! Life without him will be a void, for I loved him, not love.

ZENOBIAS. He loves love.

HANNAH. I obey.

ZENOBIAS. Your self-denial will bear fruit, though you may never witness it.

HANNAH. I will gladly bear all in his name, unworthy as I am. And now away, far away, over burning deserts!

ZENOBIAS. Remain with me in your distress. You shall be my bosom friend, (*aside*) my slave!

HANNAH. Lead me forth!

ZENOBIAS. We both will mourn for him. (*Aside.*) Now I may hope for victory.

HANNAH. Farewell, lord of my soul, farewell!
(*Exits with ZENOBIAS.*)

AHOLIBAH. Oh, Ellosar, you despise me because I like to be caressed and kissed by those I love. Does not the bee also prefer to suck the thyme because it gives the sweetest honey? Am I so different to other girls? Show me one who does not go astray before her marriage. (OTHNIEL and REUBEN, EVA and TABEA enter.)

ELLOSAR. No embroidered garments, however flaunting they may be, can hide the leprous sores of vice. And many a female, though virgin-knotted still, may be a greater harlot than she who is the odious friend of every man.

AHOLIBAH. You are cruel and unjust. How can a woman remain pure. Has nature fashioned her to live an abstemious life? Women have, perhaps, more right to expect chastity of men, than you of us.

ELLOSAR. I bear you no ill. Yet some night when your hands are toying with your breasts, or glide listlessly between your thighs, make an effort, stop your wilful play, and ponder on maternity.

OTHNIEL. Who knows how you will speak thirty years hence? Perhaps like bald-pated Habakuk around the corner, who did not succeed in reforming the world, and now is doing trade in bread and cheese. He grumbles, "Fine arts are very nice; but to make money in this damned country one has to sell something that turns into dung."

ELLOSAR. A person who listens to a dirty story without disgust, should be spit at.

OTHNIEL (*laughs.*) You better change humanity into a spitting dish, moral philosopher!

ELLOSAR. What is the use of art for Othniels? My consolation is that every human being is of some use. So also my efforts will not be in vain. Should I die unknown they will be like the blossoms which the trees shake off in spring; if I succeed, like those who defy the threatening siege of rain and storm, and finally bear fruit.

TUBAL CAIN (*enters. MOTHER MARIA, standing at the door, leaves on perceiving him.*) She does not wish to see me. Well, Mother Maria, I will get there after all. If it could only be done without wooing. Why not simply say, I am male, you are female — let us marry; let us have offspring. The animals have more sense than we.

HAGAR *and other girls come home singing from the fields.*

TABEA. A weird song!

EVA (*dressed in dark blue, with red girdle and red blossoms in her hair.*) Like the curious question, What comes after death?

ELLOSAR. Look at these flowers, just gathered from the field. How beautiful they are! What fragrant smell! Now, look at these that fade away. O'er what regions do their odors roam?

Your answer tells what human minds of immortality may know.

OTHNIEL. What a wonderful imagination!

REUBEN (*shaking his head.*) Onanism!

OTHNIEL. A peculiar association of ideas!

REUBEN. Why, human beings are after all nothing but degenerated animals, degenerated by mental self-abuse.

OTHNIEL. I believe you would make an owl of your mother, if it would serve your argument.

REUBEN. Why not, as long as I am in the right?

TABEA. I fear nobody exactly knows what is right or wrong.

REUBEN. Right is where conviction is.

ELLOSAR. Then everyone is right, and all controversy ends.

OTHNIEL. No generation is ripe for the revelation of two geniuses.

ELLOSAR. Tabea hinted at the truth. One human being never learns to understand another; even parents and children, brothers and sisters, husbands and wives walk side by side, like perfect strangers, through this life.

TUBAL CAIN. And well for them that it is so. How could a man succeed otherwise?

OTHNIEL. I am sure you have grown fat by the ignorance of others.

REUBEN. Nature gave him cupidity, and he made use of it.

TABEA. Could **not** success spring from a purer source ?

ELLOSAR. It often does, but the waters grow turbid as they onward flow.

TUBAL CAIN. Every word you speak is dirt ; he, he. A man succeeds only by patience, cunning, and hard labor. In the beginning be a sycophant, adnescent to every one you need. Sell your conscience, turn a hypocrite, pry for the weakness of superiors, seize every opportunity by which to rise, and by persistent knavery — clandestine, of course — success is sure to come. Then kick aside superfluous friends, and profit by your slyness. Be a blood-sucker, incendiary, virgin violator, the most infamous wretch that ever breathed, all the same they'll come and lick your feet. Believe old Tubal Cain ; he may be wrong in many things, but he is right in this. Now for a flask of wine with Habakuk ! (*Exits ; OTHNIEL, REUBEN, and TABEA follow.*)

HAGAR. I understand nothing of their talk. I work the whole day in the fields, and when I come home I take care of my younger sisters and brothers. I have not even time to pray. I am happy only when I am asleep. A terrible guilt

must rest upon us that we can be so unhappy.
(*Slowly exits.*)

ELLOSAR (*watching EVA.*) For ages could I look at her latent, luscious limbs. Each of her motions reveals the sumptuous sensuousness of all terrestrial scenes. The fiery flame of twilight gold on her white marble limbs, the distant blue, the pink and green suggestions, mysterious tints, sighs of virginity, sweet music to the eye! Her arms, her heaving breast, the chaste line of her tender, swelling hips, the night of ebon hair. And then her lap, night within light, dark star of future's hope, the unattainable of vital strength—creative beauty, sempiternal, forming the uniting link between man and the infinite! An angel lost between heaven and earth, the light of god upon her head and her feet wrapt in the shadow of fleeting days! (*Joins EVA at the well.*) Will you share this drink with me?

EVA (*looks dreamfully at him, then drinks.*) Oh, if it were the draught of oblivion! (*A heavenly smile plays around ELLOSAR'S lips; he presses a kiss on her sad, dark eyes, her pale cheeks begin to glow, a warm, melodious mystery quivers through every atom of her soul.*)

Long pause.

EVA. My love died without the crowning glory of a woman's fate. A life-long ache in a nightless life has sealed the surrender of my yesterdays.

Pause.

ELLOSAR. Eva, confide in me ! The secret, long-sorrowing of your soul is sacred to me. Oh, do not blush ! You have loved, but in vain. You are childless against your will. Be not ashamed ! I am as healthy in body and mind as you. One fierce embrace suffices. The *idea* alone shall reign when we are linked together. Take this kiss unto the welfare of the child which now we shall create. (*He kisses her forehead, leading her away.*) Come, lie with me, muse of my body ! Uncover your nakedness ! Let flesh be flesh, let soul be soul ! Perfume of maternity, rise into the air ! We create our children, not in tepid chambers with lurking sensations in the regions of shame, nor on debauchment's bed of flowers of soft, sirenic power, but undraped in the open air, on the life-kindling bosom of mother earth. The philistines will cry : "The land has fallen to abomination !" The prophets of mankind will murmur : "The dawn of another race !" (*Exits with EVA.*)

JESHUA (*enters, carrying MAGDALEN in his arms ; he carries her into the cottage ; re-enters, and stands at the garden gate.*) An unredeemable dreariness of thought has come over me. I have a strange presentiment that something terrible will happen before the close of this day. Where is Hannah ? I see her nowhere. Hannah ! Hannah ! No answer ! Where can she be ?

AHOLIBAH (*timidly, having remained in the background during the preceding scenes.*) I know where Hannah is.

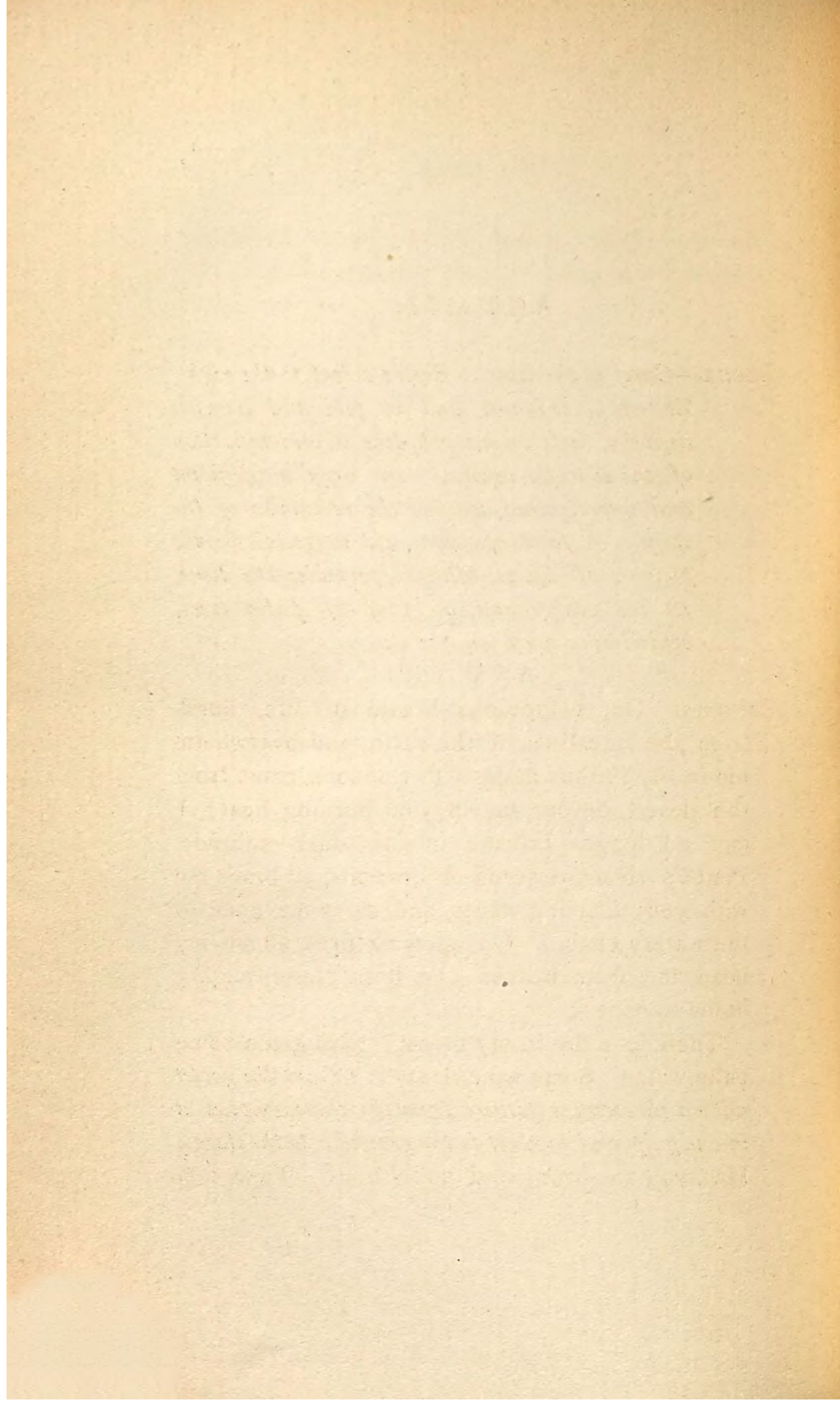
JESHUA. Speak!

AHOLIBAH. She has left the village, with the foreign queen.

JESHUA (*utters a cry of despair, and falls backwards; his mother and a few passing friends gather around him. It grows dark, as before a coming storm. He rises suddenly.*) Follow me!

Curtain.

ACT III.



ACT III.

SCENE—*Camp in the desert. Before a tent, to the right, ZENOBIA, crowned and in gold and crimson drapery, rests on a couch, like a personification of the world's agony. An orgy, magnificent and unrestrained, occupies the remainder of the stage. A feast of colors, as suggested in the pictures of Hans Makart, pervades the scene. In the background, a group of palm trees, behind it a view on the desert.*

ZENOBIA. Oh, voluptuous breath of life, burst from the intestines of the earth, and overwhelm me in thy furious majesty! Simoons, come from the desert, devour me in your burning heat! I can no longer breathe in this dark solitude. Pent-up rivers, descend in torrents, embrace me with your foaming waves, and carry me back to the watery chaos! Oh, glowing fires above my head, fall from heaven and burn these mighty limbs to ashes!

There is a fire in my breast! Bring me some palm-wine! Some wine, I say! (*Tears the goblet with a threatening gesture from the slave, empties it in one gulp, and hurls it to the ground; to the slave.*) Ha! you are strong and nobly built.—Take him

away! My Lybian lions roar for food. Strike the cymbals, eat and drink, glorify my divinity!

Life glares at me like the empty black bottomless eye-sockets of my punished slaves. The god of this land separated light from darkness, why not in me? When will the sun break through the storm-cloud of my sorrow? A ghost of barrenness is doomed forever to haunt the labyrinth beneath these fervid breasts. I have given orders that the poems of Sappho should be demolished, and my golden verses distributed instead. I have sent hundreds of sculptors to Mount Sinai to change that mountain into one mighty, colossal bust of me. I shall have temples erected all over this floating sphere, and everyone shall mock at the Ephesians' arrogance. All this, however, leaves the same frost and fire within me. Oh, had I the power to chain the tempests, and move the mountains at my command! Oh, had I thousand bodies that I could lie with thousand kings at one mad moment of inebriation! Oh, were the ocean a goblet of blood, that I could gulp it down in one draught! Would that satisfy me? — No!

Where are my stewards, Camillus, Koa, and the rest? Gold, gold, more gold, I cry! (*Scatters gold.*) I want a hundredfold Cræsean wealth to build a road to heaven, that I may visit unknown worlds.

What are these fireballs that dance before my eyes? These grinning faces — myriads of faces! Now they unite into one Cyclopean head, with the same abominable grin around its haggard lips. Hand me a flaming sword! I'll chop it off from the misshapen shoulders of the universe, that I may be alone with myself and the eternity of my despair. This world is too narrow for more than one. — I am queen of earth, lady of heaven, mother of all existences! Kneel and tremble! (*Her vassals kneel.*) Kill me, gods, or I'll kill you! (*Stares motionless at heaven.*) There is a blot upon my brain, and I see life in different colors to the rest. What power has a god? Can they forget the past? No, even the deathless gods are deprived of making that which is past, undone. (*Aside, showing her teeth.*) All this is but a vulgar comedy, and I play the fool myself. (*To the stewards.*) Distribute some precious stones among my guests — sapphires, as hard as they. (*To CAMILLUS.*) Let your hand rest upon my forehead, Camillus. All seem satisfied, save I.

CAMILLUS. My queen. a passion like yours will never be understood.

ZENOBIA. What shall I do?

CAMILLUS. How can a mortal counsel god?

ZENOBIA. There must be something which could

radiate the empty void around the earth, within my soul.

CAMILLUS. To squander love, and ask for no return.

ZENOBIA. To squander love, and ask for no return would be the birthday of another life. Yet I cannot stand at the portals of glory and bestow such benevolence. My world-wide passion yells for sempiternal sin.

Oh, Tammuz, why didst thou betray me? At thy breast of fire I would never have felt the power of darkness which now pervades my life. Love is the light which illumines all, and once extinguished nothing remains but perdition. Oh, Tammuz, return with thy purple flood of light; let me sink into thy languid stream of gold; let me dissolve in thy glorious heat — lost, lost forever!

CAMILLUS. Alas! who has not experienced the pangs of love?

ZENOBIA. You also, Camillus?

CAMILLUS. Yes, my queen. I also roamed through the garden of Aphrodite, dreaming that its roads were strewn with roses, sonnets, and laurel crowns. The brilliant skies have lost their brightness. We left those beautiful shores of golden sand, and the waves which caressed the sea shells on the strand have lost their crest of silver foam. We have

departed from that island, with its verdant hills. The melancholy dreams of future bliss no longer visit us in the sylvan groves of hope, and the roads, where we wandered arm in arm, are desolate, overgrown with weeds, like lonesome walks in the historical gardens of the past. Only the marble temple of our love still stands in all its majesty, amidst the changing scenes of autumn, but the fire of its altar is long extinguished, and the garlands of luminous flowers which entwined the columns have long withered, and only the sweet sadness of our childish faith still lingers in that realm of peace. At times, dreamlike melodies carry me back to the classic shores of Greece, where the human body in all its naked purity, sculpts lines of poetry into the marble blocks of Paros. Oh, could I wander again along the villas near the sea, and there under the dark foliage of the cypress trees, while yellow leaves sweep over marble steps, dream the dreams of a happy past.

PARSONDES. Zenobia, so deep in thought?

ZENOBIA. And you shouting for pleasure as loud as ever?

PARSONDES. That alone is joy in living! To dress in the finest shades of green and blue; to carry a sharp sword; to bridle a fire-striking mare; to be wasteful to excess in drink and food! To

force some cold, bright beauty to the ground, to carnalize a stubborn, struggling sacrifice, while strained eyeballs and meandering tongue still indicate desires indomitable ! Let me unkiss the wanton sorrow between your lips incarnadine !

ZENOBIAS. Camillus, something to while away the time.

CAMILLUS. My queen ? A fight of female gladiators—the rites of violation—a sanguinarian tragedy — the dythirambes of northern bards — Atma, the dancing woman.

ZENOBIAS. Let her appear !

ATMA, (*of lush and lithsome shape, draped in silvery gauze, veiling her as water veils a bather, enters. Her loose, dark hair is interwoven with golden threads. Her saint-like visage, with its deep, sad eyes, bears Pre-Raphaelitic reminiscences. She stretches her limbs in full enjoyment of life, and endeavors to express by the most rythmical motions, accompanied by soft music, all phases of love. Beginning with the purely physical, her dance becomes more and more dignified and spiritualized until at last it represents the ecstasy of perfect purity in love. Her limbs reveal the highest poetic beauty capable of being expressed by the human body, and Dancing reaches in this new, ideal way of revealing abstract beauty, the glory of her sister arts.*)

CAMILLUS. What suggestions for an artist ! What inspiration for a poet's soul ! What ethereal flights toward the infinite !

ZENOBIA (*to ATMA.*) Take this tiara !

PARSONDES. How, my love's oblation !

ZENOBIA (*to ATMA.*) Be free ! You gave me for one moment oblivion of myself.

CAMILLUS. That woman has driven all repose from my breast. The Lydian dreams of her marble limbs make me tremble. The Greek statues are awakened to musical life. A new art has risen from the past.

PARSONDES. And all this you see in that lean woman over there ?

CAMILLUS. I do. Form-language seems to be incomprehensible to you ; there are but few who understand it.

PARSONDES (*shrugs his shoulders.*) Zenobia, the night is cool and it grows late. The waters deluged the red nelumbus long ago. Oblivion from the hungry, idle monotony of day beckons from yonder tent, and where the giant tiger skin is spread, let your lyre sound the song of love's great rage ; let me, like night upon the darkening world, descend upon your trembling, glowing frame.

ZENOBIA. It would not tremble nor glow for you.

Hours of unknown joys soar from my darksome bed, and luxuries unseen, unfelt, oblivate my tremulent past. The sea of lust recedes, and the sound of the softest kiss sojourns in sylvan scenes, where the nightingale is sweetly singing, where brisk morning breezes sway, and where the bee is humming from flower to flower.

PARSONDES. Fluid sighs and weaving pain—golden cataracts bursting through love's domain — all creation sinks low as the waters glow, as we absorb the scaturient flow — deep, darkling desires — fire in fire — dædalian coition — ante-mundane nihilation — (*seizes her with violence.*)

ZENOBIAS. Begone! Take away your wanton face; all vices of humanity cry from your earth-drawn limbs! One step nearer, and this dagger will be plunged into your venomous breast!

PARSONDES (*staggering, hisses forth.*) Your immane pride shall have its fall, poor, wasted, aging godling! I cease to be your paramour. In amorous fever search in vain for other kings of ideal adulation — while I in wild delight, roam night for night through variegated fields of fornication! Women serving but as drains for men are indistinguishable to me. (*To partakers of the bacchanal.*) Fair hoiden, come! (*gropes at her lactescent bosom.*) or your flesh in venerous heat will burst through its pregnant vesture to-night. And you, dumb

statue of maidenhood demure, I swear your cold carnation will yet be inflamed, that like Zuleikha's glossy skin, it will be irradiant of all carnal sin. Come all, undrape, nudate, and in amorous confusion form Prince Parsondes' cushion, cover, and couch! (*The courtezans shrink before him in sexual disgust or hope, as they accompany him.*)

ZENOBIA (*to the rest.*) Leave me!

CAMILLUS. Good night, fair queen. May your heart be at rest, may the gods grant you extended years of glory! (*Exit.*)

ZENOBIA. The present is born in agony and sinks with agony into the past. Night and day pass each other in dreadful silence, and stare into my despairing face. What pleasures have been floating down on my rapid stream of life? Its rushing torrents brought me nothing but desire, brutal acts, and then disgust. And now, having met the man who could change my whole existence, in repugnant pity he turns from me, despises me for her, this beggar-child. (*Seizes her lyre, and sings softly.*)

When gardens lie dreaming in moonlight, the nocturnal flower begins her reign, unfastening her mantle of glimmering white, perfuming the air with a sinful strain.

The night moths are lured to the dangerous fire, each sips from the nectar of her desire, while

her soul is yearning for unknown treasures that can never be hers in her life of pleasures.

(It grows silent in the camp. The cries of hyenas now and then interrupt the stillness.)

Oh, night, send a mild and balmy influence o'er my frame ! The sins I have committed turn to righteousness in the restless sable clouds of thy mysterious power. Lull my thoughts into quiescence ; lowery darkness loom before my lurid inward eye, and give me sleep — sleep — death !

Death ? Death is my bitterest foe ! Dreadful vision of decay, do not grind thy yellow, jagged teeth at me ; drag thee aside, or my fist will break thy monstrous gaping jaw of black, unfathomable mystery ! There it comes crawling towards me, and rolls its eyes in furious rage. Its pointed, winding tongue jerks for my breasts. Its boiling, putrid breath stagnates the air. Diseased claws dig deep and deeper into my angry flesh. Help, help ! I will depopulate the world, and feed you with its carcasses. Gnaw away my outward beauty ; let me rot, but let me live ! Strike me blind, deaf, dumb, immovable, and I will thank thee still, if you but let me live ! I beg thee, I command thee, let me live ! Who is there ? *(Runs up to HANNAH, who enters.)* Ah ! it is you — through whom I suffer. By what magic did you win his love ? Confess, or I will kill you.

HANNAH. I loved him, and he — loved me.

ZENOBIA. What else?

HANNAH. I know not.

ZENOBIA. You lie! (*Strikes her.*)

HANNAH. I forgive you.

ZENOBIA. Speak!

HANNAH. Strike me again.

ZENOBIA. You refuse? Then you must die.

HANNAH. May it be so.

ZENOBIA (*claps her hands. CAMILLUS enters.*) Strike off her head, and hurl it into some hyena's jaw.

CAMILLUS. I cannot.

ZENOBIA. Do it, or suffer death yourself.

CAMILLUS. I cannot.

ZENOBIA. I'll do it myself! — I cannot. (*Sits down. An attendant enters in haste, and whispers to CAMILLUS.*)

CAMILLUS. My queen, the young Jew stands at the entrance of the camp, and asks admittance.

ZENOBIA (*takes a deep breath.*) Is he alone?

CAMILLUS. No, a tall Jewish woman stands at his side, and a few friends accompany him.

ZENOBIA. If you value your life, let them not enter!
(*CAMILLUS exit.*) What will the coming hour reveal to me?

HANNAH. He calls me. I hear it, and I must welcome him.

ZENOBIA (*aside.*) Now I must venture all ; now or never. His she shall not be at any cost ! How now, Camillus ?

CAMILLUS (*enters.*) He has entered.

ZENOBIA. Have I no body guard ? Are my servants all asleep ? They shall suffer for it, and so shall you, ungrateful hound !

CAMILLUS. The guards are as blameless as I. Nobody can use violence if the earnest, piercing glance of that young Jew is fastened upon one's face.

ZENOBIA (*looks at a ring on her finger, which contains poison, seizes a goblet, puts the poison into the drink.*)
Hannah, your lover has come, and you shall follow him. Come, drink with me to his happy return !

HANNAH (*drinks.*) Jehovah be praised for his wonderful guidance that led Jeshua back to my arms !

CAMILLUS. My queen, they come. (*JESHUA enters, followed by MOTHER MARIA, ELLOSAR, AHOLIBAH, and a few villagers.*)

JESHUA. Queen, return my love to me.

ZENOBIA. Take her, there she stands.

HANNAH (*bursts forth with a cry of joy. Enraptured she throws her arms wide open, makes a few steps towards JESHUA, then staggers and faints away.*)

JESHUA. Hannah, what has befallen you? Speak, look up, your love has come, and waits for you. Hannah, awake! Open your eyes, and speak to me! No answer. Your hands are of eburnean hue, your limbs are stiff and lifeless. Could it be? (*To CAMILLUS.*) Speak, if you know! Is she dead?

CAMILLUS (*firmly.*) She is poisoned.

JESHUA (*stands for a moment, as if petrified, then makes a sign to his mother and friends to be calm.*)
Peace! Be still! She speaks.

HANNAH. Let me fall into slumber. It is better so. I had nothing to do in this world but to make you happy, and for that you are not in need of me. I do not wish to darken the splendor of the sun. Do not mourn for me, yet think of me often when I am no more. Farewell, beloved, farewell! Is it the last farewell? (*She looks for a long while up to heaven, then turns her eyes on JESHUA, and dies.*)

MOTHER MARIA. Woman, restore her life, or I will strangle thee with these, a mother's hands. Do you hear me?

ZENOBIA (*absentminded.*) I see but him. Who are you?

MOTHER MARIA. His mother, who will avenge her death, if such a crime can be avenged.

JESHUA. Mother, use no violence; you have no right to do so.

MOTHER MARIA. How ! No retribution ?

JESHUA. No, Mother, no. (*To the others.*) Respect the dead !

MOTHER MARIA. Maranatha ! Maranatha !—Oh, that that demon could feel no pity for this tender flower !

JESHUA. Yes, Hannah, thou art like a broken flower. Thus far thou couldst blossom in this garden of transitoriness, now bloom on over the grave ! The beautiful has no abode on earth. (*AHOLIBAH, in mute despair, draws close her robe over her breasts.*)

ELLOSAR (*aside.*) Oh, Jeshua, the fire of your soul is so prolific that every spark will kindle conflagrations in countless lives of countless generations !

ZENOBIA (*lost in wonder, steps to JESHUA, kneels at his feet, her head bent low. He takes her head between his hands, and looks with sublime sadness into her eyes. An idea of immortality begins to dawn upon ZENOBIA'S mind. She speaks in a trembling voice.*) Master, judge your slave !

JESHUA. I have no right to judge. We all are sinners, and need salvation. Let the god of truth forgive us all ! (*In an undertone.*) All forgiving love is the redemption of my faith. (*For the first time a halo is seen around JESHUA'S head, caused by a concentration of light on his back. All kneel or bow their heads in reverence.*)

Curtain.

SUGGESTIONS
FOR A PERFORMANCE OF
"CHRIST."

In case the author could not be present to supervise the first production of his drama "Christ," the following demands are made by him, the fulfilment of which he deems not only desirable, but essential for a satisfactory performance :

1. A well-ventilated theatre, with comfortable seats, each commanding a perfect view of the whole stage.

2. An intelligent audience, not indulging in the naughty caprice of coming too late, of leaving their seats regularly during the intermission, of wearing colossal hats, of chatting and laughing during the performance, and of applauding at the most inappropriate occasions.

3. An invisible orchestra of first-class musicians, (the dramatic music to be descriptive in the style of Massenet.)

4. A proscenium enclosed by a large, broad, golden frame, so that every situation on the stage is made to appear like the representation of a painting, and that from curtain to curtain the action proceeds like a series of pictures, each worthy of a painter of repute.

5. A stage manager who, in his directions and arrangements, will borrow freely from all arts, and prove bold enough to gain a laurel wreath in introducing successfully the nude into the dramatic art. (If he should grow a little nervous at the "undrape" of Hannah and Zenobia, and the orgy in the camp, he is kindly asked to remember that tact and bold artistic inspiration will overcome all obstacles.)

6. Actors and actresses who are not exclusively mercenary in their views, and believe that the dramatic art has other ends besides that of amusing. (The author would like to see a Duse or Clara Morris as Aholibah, a Possart or Got as Tubal Cain.)

7. Supernumeraries, superior to those of the Saxon Meiningen Company, i.e. who are more natural and artistic, by displaying a greater variety of movement and expression, without becoming conspicuous.

8. Light and atmospheric effects as perfect as contemporary science, skill, and taste can produce, (for instance an adaptation of those used at the Urania lectures.)

9. Panorama-like scenery, with effects of impressionism always in harmony with costumes and accessories.

10. Costumes revealing a close study of the innumerable pictures that relate to the old and new testaments.

11. Picturesque and natural looking, if necessary, solid properties.

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